# VI.A. Assessment of Program Effectiveness

### **Permit Compliance**

The City of Santa Clarita takes great pride in being a responsible steward of the Santa Clara River and setting a good example for the community. The City strives to maintain habitat and keep wildlife corridors open along the Santa Clara River in addition to complying with issues related to water quality. A great deal of effort is being made to meet the intent of the NPDES permit and to ensure the City is making the best use of limited resources. The numerous elements of the permit are centralized through the City's Environmental Services Division that coordinates its implementation by working in conjunction with other City divisions.

Though the City established a dedicated Stormwater Utility Fee to charge all property owners within the City to fund the costs of complying with the NPDES permit, the funding source is not able to fully fund all permit requirements. With increasing permit demands and finite funding sources, the City has been forced to compromise items such as the frequency of street sweeping. The modified street sweeping schedule that began in 2009 continued into this fiscal year. Prior to that time, all streets were swept once per week. The frequency was reduced to once per month for certain portions of the year. Priority A streets are swept once per week throughout the year. The remaining streets are swept every week throughout the time of year when leaves are falling, and once per month during the rest of the year. This schedule has maintained its effectiveness in keeping trash and debris out of the storm drain system. In 2009, the City purchased a "Vactor" truck for storm drain maintenance which also has video capability to screen the inside of the storm drain system. In fiscal year 2011/12, the City televised 1200 feet of the storm drain system.

The permit requirement to have trash containers at every bus stop has also proven to be a challenge. In order to accomplish this requirement in a cost-effective, efficient manner, the City utilized the Department of Conservation Block Grant to pay for trash and recycling containers. Sheltered bus stop locations can accommodate a trash container, but the City has received complaints in regard to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) indicating containers at certain bus stops hinder disabled persons utilizing the bus stop and surrounding sidewalks. Another challenge to be addressed is designing a container that has a pleasing visual appearance, keeping in mind that in order for automated collection by the waste hauler, the containers must be designed to be emptied using the automated trash truck's hydraulic arm. Additionally, many of the containers have been vandalized, leading to poor appearance and general blight in neighborhoods. The City continues to install trash cans at bus stops, but is evaluating site conditions on a case—by-case basis to ensure safety, accessibility, and other factors.

### Evaluation

Evaluation of our stormwater program is based on trends similar to information contained in the Annual Report. The City continues to focus primary efforts on strategies to comply with permit requirements. The City does this while seeking the most cost-effective methods to comply with the intent of the permit. Trends in the type of illicit discharges, their location and responsible party are being tracked. Also, as required by the permit, the amount of debris being removed from catch basins is recorded and provided in this report. Other items to consider are the trends of certain constituents at the mass emission monitoring station. This information coupled with qualitative information, such as the performance of the storm drain system during heavy rain seasons and the public's response to outreach and educational information indicates the program is performing well.

## **Strengths and Weaknesses of the Stormwater Program**

There are many strengths with Santa Clarita's stormwater program. The greatest strength of the City of Santa Clarita's Stormwater Program is its staff members. Staff continues to search for creative ways to ensure the programs work as effectively and efficiently as possible.

The City's outreach efforts continue to be strong, and these efforts help encourage residents to report illegal dumping and increase awareness of stormwater issues for the Santa Clara River. For instance, the local outreach program includes handouts, newspaper advertisements, magazine advertisements, grocery cart ads, radio ads, television ads, giveaways, special events and other activities that are highlighted throughout the Annual Report. Outreach materials are often produced in both English and Spanish.

The City initiated a Proposition 218 ballot election campaign to update the methodology of the Stormwater Utility Fee, include a Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjuster cap, and change the rate by which the fee is based. This vote was passed during the 2009/10 Fiscal Year, and in Fiscal Year 2010/11 the City completed the administrative process to implement the new voter approved rate.

The Santa Clarita Storm Drain Maintenance program continues to provide quality service to the community and has maintained the City-owned catch basins to the high standards of the permit. Utilizing heavy vacuum equipment and experienced personnel has kept this program focused, the storm drains clean, and the system in compliance with the permit. The Storm Drain Maintenance component of the Environmental Services Division is responsive to citizen's maintenance and odor concerns in addition to the routine cleaning of the catch basins.

Field inspectors actively seeking illicit discharges and connections reflects the proactive approach the City has taken with the Illicit Connection/Illicit Discharge (IC/ID) program. The IC/ID database is used for tracking complaints, discharges and connections. Inspectors use iPad

computers in the field to enter pertinent information into the database and review locations for prior incidents. The database allows the inspectors to generate monthly and annual reports to review and discover trends. The database tracks specific types of discharges and plots them on a map, allowing the City to determine areas of pollutant specific concerns, which in turn identifies locations that require increased monitoring and/or be targeted for mailings of specific outreach materials. Inspectors, as part of their enforcement activities, also hand out brochures to residents and businesses which offer information on recycling and the proper disposal methods of hazardous waste.

As a result of a December 2009 EPA audit, the City revised their Standard Operating Procedures for the inspectors and increased our efforts to improve tracking. Staff worked with the City's Information Technology Division to create a new database for improved tracking of inspections.

Although construction and development increased slightly this year, it continued to be slow due to economic issues. As a result, the number of Standard Urban Stormwater Mitigation Plans (SUSMP) and Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPP) the City processed is far lower than in previous years. The City utilizes the services of two consultants, AEI-CASC Engineering and California Watershed Engineering, both of which have engineering staff specializing in reviewing SUSMPs and SWPPPs. Having consultant engineers that are skilled in this field allows developers/engineers to receive proficient input regarding the stormwater details of their individual projects. This has led to better understanding and compliance with the SUSMP by developers that do business in the City. The SUSMP is a standard part of the development process and many developments are subjected to this requirement. However, it remains a challenge to the development community to treat and infiltrate stormwater runoff from their projects. It has proven difficult to dedicate areas on projects to infiltrate water in addition to having the right soil conditions to percolate particularly in northern Los Angeles County. Developers of multiple Priority Projects have learned from experience what is expected for the City to accept their project's storm water requirements. Staff continues to educate developers and engineers during Development Review Committee meetings, during the plan check process, and in the field during construction.

#### **Highlights and Accomplishments**

Each year, community members volunteer to participate in the City's River Rally event to collect trash from a portion of the river bed. Sponsors of this event and other environmental organizations staff booths at the event to promote environmental stewardship. The City booth distributes information on a variety of storm water related issues including proper household hazardous waste disposal, proper disposal of used motor oil and filters, prevention of storm water pollution, and river stewardship. Over 1400 volunteers attended last year's River Rally. The event is becoming more popular every year, with groups participating from schools, churches, scout troops, non-profit organizations and families. In 2011, the River Rally event resulted in the collection of approximately 21,000 tons of trash. Since the events inception, volunteers have

collected over 315,000 pounds of trash from the Santa Clara River. Those who participate are able to directly witness the physical effects of pollution on the local water body, which has created a sense of environmental stewardship within the community.

This fiscal year, three City employees passed the State's exam for Qualified SWPPP Practitioner and Qualified SWPPP Developer under the Stormwater Program requirements for the new General Construction Permit.

This year, at Santa Clarita Elementary School, staff utilized the Enviro-scape model to demonstrate that actions such as littering, excessive pesticide application, not picking up after pets, and washing grass clippings into the gutter affect our rivers and oceans. As part of the demonstration, safe, non-toxic substances (such as Kool-Aid mix, cocoa mix, crushed pepper, etc) act as props for pollutants such as pesticides, fertilizer and trash. A spray bottle filled with water is used to demonstrate how rain can cause these pollutants to run into our rivers and oceans. This model gives students an opportunity to visually make the connection between their daily actions and the water quality of the Santa Clara River. This presentation was given to the school's GATE (Gifted and Talented Education) Program students. As a result of the presentation, the GATE students constructed a rain garden on school property to further understand and teach others about water quality.

Proper containment and disposal of manure prevents polluted runoff by averting rainwater from mixing with manure piles. In 2009, the City partnered with our franchise residential waste hauler, Waste Management (WM) to provide free manure pickup and recycling. The convenient program is free and reduces odors and flies. Residents can contact Waste Management for unlimited free green waste containers, and unlimited free watertight carts for the disposal of green waste and manure. Commercial size carts are also available from Waste Management for purchase. A newsletter is mailed annually to all horse properties in the City to continue promoting this program. Information on the program was added to the City's 2012 Green Guide and included on the City's GreenSantaClarita.com website. This year, 1431 tons of manure was recycled.

As of the end of this fiscal year, 700 households are participating in the City's Sharps Program which began in 2009. The Sharps Program allows residents to conveniently and responsibly dispose of needles, lancets, syringes and other Sharps from their homes. This service is also offered through the City's franchised residential service. On an annual basis, one free Sharps Mail-Back container is delivered by Waste Management to residents who are enrolled in the program. A second container is available to residents at a cost of \$5.00. Senior citizens who are enrolled in the program receive two free containers per year; a third container is available at a cost of \$5.00; fourth and subsequent containers are available at a cost of \$30.00. In addition to returning the container by mail, residents can also drop off their Sharps container at a S.A.F.E. Collection Center or at a Household Hazardous Waste Round-Up Event.

### **Interagency Coordination**

The City continued its working relationship with the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts. City support was provided to the District throughout the past year with public outreach to keep the public informed on the Chloride Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). The District released the Notice of Preparation for the draft Environmental Impact Report which analyzes potential projects to comply with the Chloride TMDL. The City continued support of the Sanitation District's efforts to eliminate existing Automatic Water Softeners (AWS) in the community through the implementation of an AWS Ban Enforcement Program. Residents have continued to remove their softeners and according to District records over 7869 AWS have been removed to date. Although Santa Clarita has taken the unprecedented step of removing the softeners which were a major source of chloride, and local water agencies have documented reduced chloride levels in the imported water supply, additional measures are needed to bring the Sanitation District into State compliance. The Sanitation District is continuing efforts to comply with this TMDL.

Since February 2011 the City has been working with the Los Angeles Stormwater Permit Group (LASP Group) on the proposed Los Angeles County NPDES MS4 Permit. The LASP was formed to establish a consensus among the cities regulated by the Permit, negotiate Permit elements, and find viable solutions to water quality issues. There are 62 cities that are members of this group. The group met regularly this year. Topics discussed included proposed permit structure, TMDL incorporation, low impact development, and monitoring and reporting. City staff has been participating in the LASP Group meetings, drafting comments and proposed permit language. City participation has included chairing the TMDL subcommittee, providing representation on all of the subcommittees, and serving on the negotiating committee discussing issues directly with the Regional Board Executive Officer and, more recently, the environmental community.

The City has been coordinating with three other cities (Santa Paula, Fillmore and Ventura), Los Angeles County and Ventura County regarding the Bacteria TMDL. Various meetings have been held and City staff has been working with stakeholders to develop a monitoring plan to determine where the sources of bacteria originate so an implementation plan can be developed. The Regional Board adopted the Bacteria TMDL in July 2010, the State Water Resources Control Board adopted the TMDL in October 2011, and the Federal Environmental Protection Agency enacted it in March 2012. The City and Los Angeles County, the only two entities in the Upper Santa Clara River watershed, are working together to address the Bacteria TMDL in the most efficient and comprehensive way possible.

The Santa Clara River Watershed has a mass emissions monitoring station in the Los Angeles County unincorporated/City of Santa Clarita area, directly below the 5 Freeway near Magic Mountain Parkway. Los Angeles County Department of Public Works utilizes and maintains the station.

In previous years, the City participated in a watershed-wide monitoring plan development committee sponsored by the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County. This effort focused on collecting information from various entities to determine the best locations for performing water quality monitoring in the upper and lower watershed to distribute the monitoring responsibilities in such a manner to provide for more coverage and less duplication of efforts across agencies. The outcome is expected to be better and more efficient monitoring of the watershed as a whole. The final plan was completed in December 2011. Refinement and adjustments will be required in light of the new NPDES MS4 Permit.

The City is an active participant in the Integrated Regional Watershed Management Plan (IRWMP) for the Upper Santa Clara River Watershed. The IRWMP is the product of a collaborative stakeholder process conducted under the direction of the Regional Watershed Management Group (RWMG). In an effort to adequately represent the Region, a Regional Watershed Management Group (RWMG) was formed by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2007. The IRWMP includes the City, Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, Castaic Lake Water Agency, Los Angeles County Flood Control District, Newhall County Water District, Santa Clarita Water Division, Santa Clarita Valley Sanitation District of Los Angeles County, and Valencia Water Company as well as various stakeholders including environmental groups, members of local town councils and local residents. The purpose of the IRWMP is to integrate planning and implementation efforts and facilitate regional cooperation with the goals of reducing water demand, improving operational efficiency, increasing water supply reliability, improving water quality, and improving resource stewardship. The IRWMP reflects the unique needs of the Upper Watershed, which encompasses the City of Santa Clarita, the communities of Castaic, Stevenson Ranch, West Ranch, Agua Dulcé and Acton, various unincorporated areas in Los Angeles County, open space areas of the Santa Monica Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation, and portions of the Angeles National Forest. It provides ongoing guidance and prioritization regarding implementation projects, for Proposition 50 and Proposition 84 Grants and other funding sources.

This fiscal year, work began on a Salt and Nutrient Management Plan (SNMP) under a contract funded through Proposition 84. As required by the State Water Resources Control Board's Recycled Water Policy, each watershed basin is required to have an SNMP which is intended to aid in the management of all salts and nutrients tributary to the groundwater.

The City participates in the Santa Clara River Committee Watershed Coalition of the Ventura County IRWMP, which handles the Lower Santa Clara River watershed. This allows the City to understand and participate in the processes that are occurring in the lower watershed to better correlate the efforts ongoing in all reaches of the watershed and to verify that the intent of preservation and protecting the entire watershed is coordinated between both IRWMP groups.

### **Future Plans**

With the release of the new MS4 Permit slated for October 2012, the City will be analyzing how to implement new permit requirements. Additional efforts will be needed for educating City staff and the community on what the regulations mean and how to comply.

The City will continue efforts to comply with the Bacteria TMDL and changes to the program based on the proposed NPDES MS4 Permit.

The City will evaluate projects for potential grant application for Proposition 84 funds. This fiscal year, two agreements were executed with the Department of Water Resources for previously granted Proposition 84 funds, one for the Salt and Nutrient Management Plan, and another for the update IRWMP document. Future plans include increasing outreach efforts to encourage more diverse stakeholder participation.

### Suggestions to Improve the Effectiveness of the Program

The City of Santa Clarita is constantly striving to improve all of its processes, duties and activities of the Stormwater Program. Aside from the need to locate additional funding for the many aspects of the NPDES permit, the Stormwater Program is very strong and is well situated to maintain good water quality in the Santa Clara River. Ways are being sought to increase public awareness and outreach and to implement innovative programs. In addition, the new and improved database for tracking inspection activities will be used to further those efforts and adjustments will be made when necessary. The City would like to further customize the stormwater program activities and BMPs to our community's pollutants of concern to ensure maximum benefit to the environment.